

# Inspection of Willow House

Halliwell Homes Education Centre, 120 Stanley Road, Cheadle, Stockport, Greater Manchester SK8 6RF

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Inspection dates: 10–12 March 2020

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils thrive during their time at Willow House. Leaders and staff are aspirational for pupils to succeed. The pupils who spoke to us said that they enjoy coming to school. They told us that they feel safe in school because the adults care about them.

Over time, pupils successfully build trust and positive relationships with adults and each other. The effective support that pupils receive helps them to be able to regulate their own behaviour and emotions. This helps pupils to behave well. Pupils begin to understand how their actions can make other people feel. Adults deal swiftly with any bullying.

Lunchtimes are well supervised. Pupils like playing games outside with staff. They also enjoy spending time chatting with their friends. The smiles on pupils' faces reflect how much they appreciate the many opportunities that leaders provide. Pupils like planning the menu and making lunch for each other on Fridays. They love visiting the local library and other places of interest, such as the owl sanctuary. Photographs show pupils' eyes wide with awe with an owl perched on their arm. Pupils are very proud of their recent success in a local trampolining competition with other schools.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The curriculum has been well designed to help pupils to overcome their many barriers to learning. When pupils start at this school, they have little belief in themselves. Leaders strive to help pupils to develop strategies that help them to raise their self-esteem. Leaders' high expectations are shared by staff. Pupils are well supported by skilled staff to modify their emotions and behaviour. Any disruptions to learning are resolved quickly by staff.

Over time, pupils engage in most aspects of their learning. They achieve well from their starting points socially, emotionally and academically. The majority of pupils successfully move on to mainstream schools and successful long-term fostering placements.

Pupils follow an individualised curriculum that is specific to their individual needs. Staff deliver the curriculum well. This is because they have a good knowledge of the subjects that they teach. In most subjects, curriculum plans set out the knowledge that leaders want pupils to acquire. They have carefully considered the order it is to be taught. However, in a small number of subjects, plans do not clearly identify the precise knowledge and sequence of learning for pupils. Some lessons do not build on what has been taught before.

Teachers mostly use assessment information well. They accurately identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to practise and apply what they know confidently before they learn something new.

Pupils work hard. Work in their books reflects the increasing pride that they take in their achievements.

Leaders have made reading a high priority. Many pupils do not know the sounds that letters make when they start school. Teachers ensure that pupils quickly learn these. The books that pupils read match the sounds that they are learning in class. Over time, pupils become fluent and accurate readers.

Teachers foster a love of reading across a range of texts and subjects. Pupils said that they enjoy listening to stories and discussing the illustrations. Pupils read with an adult several times during the day in a calm and nurturing environment. This supports them to become confident, competent readers. Teachers develop pupils' vocabulary knowledge through carefully selected texts. This helps pupils to find the words that they need to express what they want to say.

Pupils are prepared extremely well for life in modern Britain. The curriculum enables them to develop an understanding and respect for different faiths and cultures. Pupils' studies of slavery and Black history enable them to make comparisons to racism in today's society. Pupils' personal development is enhanced further through activities to promote their resilience, self-esteem and independence. Pupils play an active part in the life of the school. For example, members of the school council have played a significant role in improving the equipment in the school's grounds. Pupils proudly represent their school in sports competitions and when out in the local community.

Governors know the school well. They hold leaders to account for the quality of education that pupils receive. There is a strong capacity for continued improvement. The proprietor and governors are mindful of staff's well-being. They understand the complex challenges of working with vulnerable pupils. Staff feel very well supported by leaders.

Leaders, including the proprietor, ensure that all of the independent school standards are met, including their obligation under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act. The accommodation and premises are maintained to a high standard.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are extremely vigilant. All checks on adults in school are carried out to make sure they are safe to work with pupils. Staff know how to record and report any safeguarding concerns. The training that they receive enables them to support vulnerable pupils well. Leaders ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, such as when they are out in the community and when they are using the internet. Pupils know who to speak to if they have any worries or concerns.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)**

In a small number of subjects, other than English and mathematics, some curriculum plans do not clearly identify the precise knowledge and sequence that is to be taught. In these subjects, some lessons do not build on what has been taught before. Leaders need to ensure that curriculum plans clearly identify the sequence that knowledge is to be taught so that pupils can achieve well in all subjects.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136230
<b>DfE registration number</b>	356/6035
<b>Local authority</b>	Stockport
<b>Inspection number</b>	10145446
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 14
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	4
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Andrew Constable
<b>Chair</b>	Mathew Hargreaves
<b>Headteacher</b>	Patrick Rice
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£19,500
<b>Telephone number</b>	01614379491
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.halliwellhomes.co.uk/education">www.halliwellhomes.co.uk/education</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:contact@halliwellhomes.co.uk">contact@halliwellhomes.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17–19 October 2017

## Information about this school

- Pupils are in the care of several different local authorities.
- On average, pupils typically attend the school for 18 months.
- The headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- During the inspection, we spoke with the proprietor and a member of the governing board and the headteacher. We also spoke to a member of staff from social care.
- We carried out deep dives in: reading, history, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic education. We met with subject leaders, visited lessons and spoke to teachers. We spoke with pupils about their learning. We looked at examples of their work and listened to some pupils read.
- We also reviewed other subjects, such as religious education and physical education.
- During the inspection, we reviewed a range of documentation, including documentation relating to safeguarding and information relating to the independent school standards. We also looked at records of pupils' attendance and pupils' personal education plans.

## Inspection team

Amanda Stringer, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Nixon

Her Majesty's Inspector

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